Twenty Questions and Answers on

A System for Universal Health Care

What is it?
How can we hope to achieve it?

SATHI
(Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives)
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Introduction

Various pro-people bodies working on health issues like Jan Swasthya Abhiyan have been advocating since many years to ensure 'Health and Health Care for All' in India. There has not been much positive response from the State so far to this demand. However, during the recent period, several opportunities as well as threats have emerged in the health care scenario in India. Given the background of weak and under-resourced public health services combined with dominant, often unaffordable and irrational private medical care, there is a tremendous social need to bring in a system which would ensure access for all to appropriate and good quality health care. In this context, now proposals for universalising access to health care are emerging on the national agenda. At the level of civil society organisations, Medico Friend Circle has been debating and working out possible directions for a system for 'Universal Access to Health Care' (UAHC), while at official level, in October 2011, the High Level Expert Group (HLEG) of the Planning Commission has submitted its report on 'Universal Health Coverage'. Based on this setting, we feel that it is relevant for health professionals, health activists and socially concerned persons to understand some of the key concepts related to UHC, so that many more people can meaningfully and actively contribute to the ongoing debates and discussions. Considering the fact that differing 'versions' of UHC are in circulation, which have widely different implications for the future of the health system in India, it is very important that pro-people networks, organisations and individuals understand the nuances of this issue and take stands that would ensure that UHC in India does not primarily become an avenue for further profiteering by the corporate health and insurance sector, but instead of that a 'public-centred' vision for Universal Health Care is actualised in the coming period. Keeping in
mind this situation, SATHI is publishing this booklet which it hopes, will help activists and interested persons in understanding some basics of this important theme.

A SATHI team (Drs. Anant Phadke, Abhay Shukla, Nilangi Sardeshpande) conceptualized, planned and steered the preparation of this booklet including incorporation of comments from the reviewers and preparing the final draft. The basic draft of this booklet has been ably prepared by Dr. Amita Pitre, who collated information from a wide variety of sources to present this complex topic with a pro-people perspective, in intelligible form. Dr. Abhijeet More of SATHI has helped in obtaining feedback on the draft. We are grateful to Renu Khanna, Dr. Indira Chakravarthi and Ravi Duggal who have provided several useful suggestions as reviewers, while of course the views expressed in the final booklet remain the responsibility of the publishers. Sharda Mahalle has capably done the layout and design of the booklet to prepare it for publication. We would like to acknowledge the many discussions in Medico Friend Circle and Jan Swasthya Abhiyan over the last few years on the theme of 'Universal Access to Health Care/Health Care for All' which have informed many of the views and analysis presented in the following pages, and hope that this booklet would be a small contribution towards the massive task of ensuring 'Health and Health Care for All' in India.

Abhay Shukla
Coordinator,
SATHI

23rd March 2012,
Shahid Bhagat Singh Din
Abbreviations

AIDS  Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ART  Anti Retroviral therapy
AYUSH  Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy
BPL  Below Poverty Line
CBMP  Community Based Monitoring and Planning
CHW  Community Health Worker
DHKI  District Health Knowledge Institute
ESIS  Employees State Insurance Scheme
FCC  First Contact Care
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
GNI  Gross National Income
HCA  Health Care for All
HFA  Health for All
HIV  Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HLEG  High Level Expert Group
HRH  Human Resources for Health
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JSA</td>
<td>Jan Swasthya Abhiyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCHRH</td>
<td>National Council for Human Resources in Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS</td>
<td>National Health System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHSO</td>
<td>National Health Security Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSSO</td>
<td>National Sample Survey Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public Private Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People's Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRT</td>
<td>Renal Replacement Therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSBY</td>
<td>Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana</td>
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<td>SATHI</td>
<td>Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAHC</td>
<td>Universal Access to Health Care</td>
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<td>UHC</td>
<td>Universal Health Care</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
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Twenty Questions and Answers about
A System for Universal Health Care
What is it? How can we hope to achieve it?

This booklet answers 20 key questions on Universal Health Care (UHC). It explains how good quality, appropriate Health Care which is free at the point of service, can be made available to everybody in India within the coming decade or so.

This booklet first explains basic concepts like what is exactly meant by Universal Health Care; what are the core principles of UHC etc.

It then turns to the experiences of various countries including some developing countries of moving towards the goal of UHC and basic requirements as regards financing, provisioning, governance, which have to be fulfilled to realize the goal of UHC.

Lastly, the booklet discusses the specificities of the Indian situation, including the need to strengthen, expand the Public Health System and to regulate the private providers. This last section also discusses the first steps that need to be taken in face of the huge challenges we face in India along the road to 'Health Care for All', which is part of the larger goal of 'Health for All'.

Various pro-people bodies working on health issues like Jan Swasthya Abhiyan have been advocating since 2000, 'Health and Health Care for All' in India. Now Universal Health Care has begun to figure in the official agenda. Perhaps as a preparation for the next Lok Sabha election in 2014, the Prime Minister's Office fostered the appointment of a 'High Level Expert Group' (HLEG) by the Planning Commission to prepare a 'blueprint' for achieving Universal Health Coverage in India by 2020. It's report is being considered for formulating the 12th Five Year plan and a number of debatable issues are emerging. With Universal Health Care developing into an important national issue, this booklet would be of interest to a wide audience, including health activists, health professionals, researchers, trade unionists, journalists and social-political activists.

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